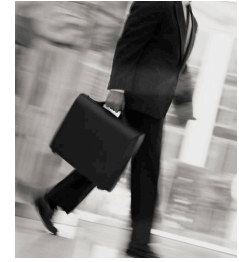


How to Become a Lawyer



Job Description

Lawyers (also called attorneys) help to prevent and solve legal problems for their clients. As an advocate, a lawyer represents a client in criminal or civil trials by presenting evidence and arguing in court on behalf of his/her client. As an advisor, lawyers counsel their clients about their legal rights and obligations. They make suggestions about how to handle a particular issue or what course of action to take in business and personal matters. Lawyers research laws and judicial decisions and apply the law to the specific situation faced by their client. Lawyers may specialize in bankruptcy, probate, international, elder, environmental law, intellectual property, etc.

Work Environment

Lawyers do most of their work in offices, courtrooms, and law libraries. Sometimes, lawyers meet in a client's home or business, even a hospital or prison. Travel is common if a lawyer needs to attend meetings, gather evidence, and appear before courts or legislative bodies. Lawyers work long hours and may work evenings and weekends to conduct research and prepare for a court trial. Approximately 33% work over 50 hours per week.

Career Outlook

Each year, a large number of students graduate from law school and thus create competition for jobs, especially in large metropolitan areas. A person who graduates with an excellent academic record from a highly regarded law school will have the best job opportunities. Job opportunities exist if a person is willing to relocate and pass the state bar exam to work in another state. Employers are also seeking graduates with advanced law degrees and experience in a specialty, such as tax, patent, or admiralty law.

Growth is projected in the private sector where self-employment is expected to grow slowly. For lawyers who wish to work independently and establish a private practice, they will have the most success opening up a business in a small town and expanding suburban areas. Typically, in a small town, there is less competition from a larger established law firm, and new lawyers may have an easier time building relationships for potential clients.

The latest employment projections from California Labor Market Information estimate that 2,900 jobs will open per year from 2006 – 2016. <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov> According the Bureau of Labor Statistics approximately 22,777 new job openings are expected to the U.S. each year from 2006 – 2016. <http://www.bls.gov/>

Income

Lawyers who work in private practice tend to earn more pay than a person who works in a salaried position. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, national monthly pay ranges include: Entry Level (\$4,538), Average (\$10,396), and Top Level (\$13,867 and up).

How to Become a Lawyer

Education Requirements

Obtain a Bachelor's Degree: 4 years

What to major in? To become a lawyer, a four-year Bachelor's degree is required prior to attending law school. Students typically major in one of the following:

Economics	Philosophy	Public Administration	Sociology
History	Political Science	Social Science	Speech

Regardless of the major chosen, a multi-disciplinary background is recommended with a strong foundation in critical thinking and problem solving. Recommended college level courses include: *English, foreign languages, public speaking, government, philosophy, history, economics, math, and computer science, etc.* If a person plans to study a particular area within law, then s/he should have a strong background in the subject. For example, if a person plans to become a tax lawyer, then the person needs extensive knowledge of accounting.

During a student's third year in college (junior year), it is recommended to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). At this time, a person will apply to law school. Each school's application will be different, but most require an application, personal essay, letters of recommendation, transcripts, LSAT scores, and possibly a personal interview.

Admission to law school is extremely competitive, and it is important to have excellent grades, an aptitude for the study of law, and prior work experience or internships.

Attend Law School: 3 years

During the first year of law school, students take specific core course, including constitution law, contracts, property law, torts, civil procedure, and legal writing. For the remaining two years, students choose specialized courses in the field s/he may want to specialize, such as tax, labor, or corporate law. Also during this time, students should gain valuable practical experience to be competitive in the job market after graduation. Practical experience includes participating in school-sponsored legal clinics and court competitions; working in legal-aid offices or legislative committees; and writing articles on legal issues for a school's law journal.

After graduation from law school, a graduate receives the degree of Juris Doctor (J.D.). If a lawyer plans to specialize, perform research, or teach, an advanced law degree may be required. Joint degree programs are offered for business administration or public administration.

Exam

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is required for acceptance into Law School. The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) provides detailed information on applying to law school, finding the right school, and practice information for the LSAT.
<http://www.lsat.org/>

How to Become a Lawyer

License

To practice law in the courts, a lawyer must be licensed by the state, or admitted to its bar. All requirements are established by a state's highest court. A person must pass a written bar examination as well as a separate written ethics examination. In most situations, lawyers must pass the bar examination *in each state* in which they are going to practice law.

Sources of Additional Information

The State Bar of California
Office of Admissions
180 Howard St.
San Francisco, CA 94105-1639
(415) 538-2303

American Bar Association (ABA)
740 15th St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 2005-1019
www.abanet.org
service@abanet.org
(202) 662-1000

Occupational Outlook Handbook
2010-2011
Available in the Career Center Library

Eureka: The California Career Information System
www.eureka.org
Site Code: For current Foothill students only, please call the Career Center

Career Center Resource Library
Room 8329
(650) 949-7229